DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 385 353 PS 023 315

TITLE	Principles To Link By. Integrating Education, Health, and Human Services for Children, Youth, and Families: Systems That Are Community-Based and School-Linked. Final Report.
INSTITUTION	American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (DHHS/PHS), Atlanta, GA.; Health Resources and Services Administration (DHHS/PHS), Washington, DC. Maternal and Child Health Bureau.; Kauffman Foundation, Kansas City, MO.
PUB DATE	94
NOTE	17p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Agency Cooperation; *Community Involvement; Community Services; Educational Environment; *Federal Legislation; *Federal Programs; Government School Relationship; *Human Services; *Integrated Services; Public Health; School Community Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	*Linkage Programs

ABSTRACT

This report describes the importance, collaboration procedure, and principles of linking integrated service systems that are community-based and school-linked, established by the National Consensus Building Conference on School Linked Integrated Service Systems. The consensus principles aim to create comprehensive, effective, community-based service systems; make support available to children, youth, and families; and focus on prevention. The report consists of two parts. The first part explains how the consensus was developed and what action will be taken next. The second part describes consensus principles relating to: (1) the basic elements of preventive strategies and effective services; (2) the role of financing; (3) the role of needs assessment and program evaluation; and (4) the importance of stronger structures for coordination. (AP)

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INTEGRATING

AND

FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES:

Systems that are Community Based and School-Linked

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FINAL REPORT

1994

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The National Consensus Building Conference on School-Linked Integrated Service Systems and the development of the final report have been made possible through generous support from the following organizations:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation

Maternal and Child Health Bureau
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Stuart Foundations

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FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES:

Systems that are Community-Based and School-Linked

DON'T JUST FIX AROUND THE EDGES. BE BOLD. WE MUST UNITE AROUND GOALS THAT INVOLVE EVERYONE SO CHILDREN WILL HAVE A VOICE...

JOYCELYN ELDERS, MD, *U.S. SURGEON GENERAL*

More than 50 national organizations concerned with the well being of children, youth, and families have taken a bold step. In January 1994, their representatives developed a set of principles that would pave the way for unprecedented collaboration among essential services at local, state, and federal levels.

Bold as it may seem, this also is a necessary step. On one hand, the barriers to stable, productive lives grow higher every day for millions of children and families. They need the very best support they can get. On the other, education, health, and human services have reached a crucial point in their evolution — a point where working together to assure strong families and successful young people is a very important goal for them. Collaboration is essential to providing excellent support.

The challenge is to free ourselves from categorical programs and treat the whole child.... All of you who believe in these programs must tell us what you have found in your communities that will help us.

SEN. EDWARD KENNEDY (D-MASS.) CHAIRMAN,
SENATE EDUCATION AND LABOR COMMITTEE

HOW THE CONSENSUS DEVELOPED

Aware of these challenges, several national groups representing a cross-section of education, health, human services, and child advocacy decided to seek support for a national consensus-building conference. Foundations and federal agencies responded favorably, and invitations went out to a broad cross-section of about 50 groups — public as well as private — to meet, share their views, and come to an agreement on common principles about integrating their services.

All of these groups ordinarily are not around the table together. Nonetheless, the issues are so important and the timing so opportune for profound changes that the participants came with a resolve to take significant action. They focused on four major areas for local, state, and federal action:

- Assuring effective services
- Building capacities for communities to conduct needs assessments and evaluations
- Initiating more collaborative funding practices
- Expanding or developing structures for integrated services

TERRY K. PETERSON
Counselor to the Secretary,
U.S. Department of Education

People are ready to think big. They are not tied to categorical programs... But if you want people to be comfortable with flexibility, you have to assure them that they will be included, that they will have a seat at the table.

OLIVIA GOLDEN, COMMISSIONER
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

The big challenge is going to be for communities to cut across the lines of diversity and the lines of disciplines in order to bring people together to develop plans that address the lives of children and families as a whole.

JANET RENO, *U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL*

Those at the consensus-building conference drew from their own evolving experiences with collaboration as well as commissioned papers prepared by experts in each of the four areas. They listened to the opinions and advice of Administration officials and members of Congress from both parties. Finally, they agreed upon 31 principles to guide efforts under the four priorities.

Within a few weeks, the principles were shared with Congress. Because of impending legislation, it is important for Congressional members and staffs to be aware that many diverse groups now support the infusion of new ways of working together throughout the many federal policies and programs affecting children and their families.

We have an historic opportunity to make integrated services part of the reforms of education, welfare, and health care.

ROBERT F. ST. PETER, MD, *PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE*

THE NEXT STEPS

The principles speak to all levels of governance. Informed and thoughtful state and community policies are as essential as federal efforts to ensure that integration of services takes place and stays focused on better outcomes for children and families.

It is hoped that the principles become a vital part of decisionmaking in communities throughout the nation and in every state. Agreement on the principles was just the first step. In coming months the principles will be used to provoke serious discussions about how to integrate services wisely and effectively whenever and wherever the well-being of children and families is being considered. Ultimately, the principles should lead to much better results from existing and future resources available to educate, ensure the health of, and support children, youth, and families.

Our programs work because they involve parents and they have the full cooperation of schools and other agencies.

REP. CHRISTOPHER BOND (R-MO.),

SPEAKING ABOUT EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS IN MISSOURI

NEXT ON AGENDAS

All of the principles are important, and they are interdependent. Policymakers may prefer to develop priorities, but they need to keep in mind the common themes expressed throughout the principles, namely, that the integration of services should be:

- Developed, implemented, and evaluated by communities
- Family-centered and oriented to the diverse needs of people, not of institutions
- Prevention-focused and comprehensive

While the principles can provide cohesion to efforts at integrating services, they do not suggest a single model. They represent consensus around a set of values that strengthen the individual visions and efforts of communities and states.

There is, however, a single fact facing all those who make or carry out policies for delivering education, health, and human services. It is that the needs of children and families are urgent. The most important use of the principles may be to expedite the necessary process of ensuring that policies and programs are organized to significantly improve the outcomes for children and families.

Ultimately, it is everyone working together — from the families receiving health, education, and social services to policymakers at the highest levels — that will bring about the needed revolution in supports for children, youth, and families.

The principles provide an essential—and immediate—guide for that very important process.

Above left: Congresswoman Lynn C. Woolsey (D-Ca.) and Dr. Betty Lowe, President of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Above: U.S. Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders.

PRINCIPLES TO LINK BY

Integrated Service Systems that are Community-Based and School-Linked

Introduction

The changing environment for growing up in America is unprecedented and in many ways irreversible. Children, youth, and families cannot expect to return to simpler times. However, they should be able to depend upon the vast human services systems that exist to ensure their well being working together efficiently, effectively, and humanely. The leadership of these various systems—education, health, social and other human services—is taking significant steps to make that happen. Concerned and committed people at federal, state, and local levels are endeavoring to create comprehensive support for every child and young person. Gaps persist, but the will is there to make systems work better and work together.

Emerging out of these experiences are some common principles. If they could underlie services in every context and in every place, they would strengthen individual services and help create the seamless, nurturing environment for growing up that our children and families need. The principles are sound. They are based on knowledge gained from many efforts underway. They do more than just spell out new ways of conducting business in most of our institutions. They would require a transformation in how professionals, agencies, and organizations relate to children and families.

Certainly, we do not propose a single model. Our consensus is around a set of values and principles that strengthen the individual visions and efforts of communities and states across the country. At the same time, implementing the principles in any situation will not be easy. It will require extensive commitment of time, effort, and resources.

Most definitely, however, we cannot tolerate any delay. The needs are too great and the opportunities for change unparalleled. The leadership of groups committed to the well-being of our young has come together and reached an important consensus. Policymakers at all levels should keep the momentum going and use these principles as tools for reforms. We all want our children to have the best. We have the capacity to create the best. We need support for that goal.

Basic Elements of Preventive Strategies and Effective Services

The myriad problems surrounding children, youth, and families today need not overwhelm them. There are a number of successful interventions through and across health systems, early intervention programs, schools and preschools, social services, child care, and income supports. These interventions tell us a lot about what works effectively.

1 Services should be community-based and community-delivered.

The needs of children, youth, and families can vary dramatically from community to community, and the definition of "community" itself should not be bound by geography or politics. Similarly, communities have different strengths and resources for meeting their needs. Services and support programs, therefore, should be locally planned, operated, and evaluated with broad public and private community involvement. Moreover, families and youth always should be essential partners with professionals in planning and implementing services.

2 Services should be family-centered, driven by the needs of children, youth, and families, and built on strengths.

All too often, education, health, and social services fall short of their goals because they are designed for bureaucratic needs rather than family needs. Together, families (and where appropriate, young people themselves) and providers must be able to construct services that are welcomed by families, support their independence, and strengthen their community ties. Given adequate tools and information, they can make informed decisions. The service systems should ensure that families have opportunities to participate in decisions with them in meaningful ways.

3 Needed services should be available and accessible to all in a variety of settings, using a combination of public, private, community and personal resources.

Children, youth, and families in need are everywhere. Improved, committed services systems should exist in all communities, providing high-quality education, health, social, family support, and other services to all who need them. Many of the necessary services do not currently exist in some communities, and action should be taken to make them available. Continuity of services should be maintained.

4 Services should be culturally competent.

In some localities, providers and those they serve do not share common backgrounds and/or experiences; services or styles or provisions may be valued by some but ineffective and offensive to others. Programs and staff should be responsive to the needs of individuals with disabilities and of culturally, ethnically, linguistically, and economically diverse populations.

5 **Services should focus on primary prevention, early intervention, and strengthening the ability of children, youth, and families to help themselves.**

This often will avert interventions that are more complex, problematic, and expensive. All children and youth are less likely to have serious problems if they receive a high-quality education; varied opportunities for growth and development; a consistent source of preventive and primary care; and, when needed, family support and early intervention.

6 **Services should be comprehensive, and a continuum of services should be available.**

Children, youth, and families with numerous problems need support and assistance in a variety of contexts. Addressing education or behavior problems without attending to family or health problems is seldom effective. Individualized, inclusive services should be developed. These should be intensive for seriously vulnerable families. Round-the-clock coverage should be available in emergency situations.

7 **Services should be flexible.**

Adherence to rigid requirements significantly decreases the ability to be effective. Services should be adapted to individual circumstances and provided at convenient times and places. Agency personnel should allow discretion for those in direct contact with children and families. With increased flexibility, however, comes accountability for results based on the goals of the different agencies/organizations and individuals involved.

8 **Public, private and community services should be coordinated, integrated, and collaboratively delivered.**

Comprehensive services cannot be effectively delivered in piecemeal fashion. This means new roles for professionals. In addition to carrying out responsibilities within their own organizations and professions, staff should be able to collaborate effectively with others across programs and disciplines.

9 **Services should be of high quality and developmentally appropriate.**

To ensure the highest standards of service, accountability systems keyed to desired outcomes should be in place. Staff should be well trained, fully qualified, and know how to work effectively with children, youth, and families.

10 **Services should be cost-effective.**

Resources are too scarce to be invested when they cannot be effective and efficient. Resources must be focused on programs with a high likelihood of demonstrably enhancing life prospects of children, youth, and families.

The Role of Financing

Financing strongly influences the scope, characteristics, and effectiveness of services and support available to children, youth, and families. Current financing patterns erect major barriers to coherent and comprehensive services. Changes in financing work only when accompanied by changes in the way services are planned, organized, and delivered; staff are prepared and supported; governance mechanisms are structured; and perhaps most important, accountability is ensured.

1 **Two priorities should guide funding policies–a focus on achieving desired results and greater flexibility in how dollars are used to accomplish them.**

This means budget strategies should link the allocation of resources to those investments that will achieve objectives. Also, investments should be made in developing community capacities to set and measure results and evaluate the quality of services. Finally, governance changes will be needed to allow regular, ongoing assessment of results that cut across service boundaries.

2 **States and communities should have greater flexibility in using categorical funds.**

Administrative requirements should be simplified to allow pooling of funds, joint operation of programs, and greater discretion to those who work directly with children, youth, and families.

3 **Stable and adequate funding should be available to support collaboration, particularly the infrastructures needed for effective services.**

Investments should be made in: information systems, monitoring and evaluation, facilities and equipment, training (including interdisciplinary training), technical assistance, technological applications, and administrative support.

4 **Funding should promote intra-agency, interagency and inter-system decisionmaking.**

At the federal, state, and especially community levels, funding policies should strongly encourage shared decisionmaking about the allocation of dollars to child and family programs without being prescriptive. There should be a resource plan that tracks all funding going to children, youth, and families. Individual funding decisions should take this overall picture into account.

5 **Dollars gained by increased efficiency and expenditures on prevention and early intervention should be invested to further expand prevention and early intervention.**

Preventive and early intervention services can avoid the need for expensive, crisis-oriented solutions. More efficient delivery of services also can produce such savings. In many instances, the savings are considerable and can be quantified.

6 **Funding should protect vulnerable populations.**

All funding decisions must preserve and strengthen concerns for equity with firm expectations that certain populations will be adequately served. This assurance need not be as prescriptive as current categorical restrictions. Priorities can be established without rigidly prescribing the services to be provided or the populations to be targeted.

The Role of Needs Assessment and Program Evaluation

Communities should conduct comprehensive needs assessments to assure that their services are based upon documented needs, fill gaps in services, and draw from community strengths and available resources. Such assessments also should evaluate short- and long-term impacts. This community-based approach to determining what needs to be done is now a major focus of federal, state, and private funders and should also be a priority for communities sincerely committed to better results for children, youth, and families. However, this strategy would be a significant change from business as usual in many communities.

1 **Needs assessment, program development, and evaluation should be part of an ongoing process.**

Consistent, reliable information will help communities monitor progress toward common goals and improve their services because they will be able to make informed midcourse changes.

2 **Needs assessment and program evaluation should be tailored to each community and shaped by community members.**

These important strategies should involve representative and highly creditable community members, including families, public and private agencies, professional associations, those working directly with families (including professionals in independent practice), community-based organizations, businesses, and elected and appointed officials. Assessments and evaluations should keep the welfare of children and families as their focus.

3 **Needs assessment should focus on community strengths and available resources, as well as needs and service gaps.**

All these should be included as communities consider the results they want and for which they are willing to be held accountable.

4 **Needs assessment and program evaluation should give communities the information they need to meet their objectives.**

Developing community capacity for self-assessments will improve ongoing interventions and help ensure buy-in. In addition, communities must work closely with external evaluators to ensure that evaluations are useful, defensible, and reflect realistic time frames.

5 **Funding from all levels and sources, private as well as public, should balance accountability with the need to encourage service innovation.**

Accountability systems should not unfairly penalize communities, distort their program activities, or inhibit them in other ways from pioneering new ways of delivering services. Similarly, funders should not pressure communities prematurely to achieve results. Success will depend upon available resources and sufficient time to test, measure, and refine the interventions.

6 **Federal and state agencies should establish uniform reporting requirements and standardize their data definitions.**

These steps would facilitate evaluation of integrated services and increase the comparability of evaluations across sites, states, and agencies. Another result would be insights as to how successful programs could be adapted to other settings.

7 **To support change, investments should be made in multiple strategies for needs assessment and program evaluation.**

Using a variety of well-designed approaches compensates for limitations inherent in any one. In addition, current strategies are not sufficient to assess the effectiveness of integrated services. New systems need new approaches. This may require investing in new and innovative technologies.

8 **Communities should receive technical and financial support in assessing needs and measuring progress.**

To date, the complexity of conducting research on integrated services has prevented full assessment of many efforts. Most communities will only be able to take on these tasks if they have adequate data, resources, and comprehensive technical assistance. This investment should be a priority even in light of the decreasing resources available for services delivery.

The Importance of Stronger Structures for Coordination

Creating a comprehensive system of services for children, youth, and families requires coordinating structures that cut across service sectors, agencies, and programs. Such structures are now evolving. They range from informal to legally established organizations, from entities created through memoranda of agreement to those sanctioned by key governmental bodies. Serving as intermediary organizations, they facilitate and negotiate relationships among public, private, and community agencies and independent practitioners. Their aim is to assure a full spectrum of effective and high-quality services that sustain children, youth, and families. Their effectiveness will depend upon their ability to create genuine collaboration among service systems.

1 Coordinating structures should be collaborative.

For the coordinating structure to function as a cohesive force, the leadership of all service systems should agree to develop and pursue a shared vision and common goals; share resources, responsibility and accountability; and use their personal and institutional power to change their systems and increase overall community support for children, youth, and families.

2 Coordinating structures should be community based and reflect the diversity and uniqueness of the community.

To be credible and legitimate, the coordinating structure should reflect the racial, ethnic, income, gender, and age characteristics of the community and of those who benefit from services. At a minimum, its members should include representatives of families, public and private agencies, those with disabling conditions, professional associations, those working directly with families (including professionals in independent practice), community-based organizations, businesses, and appointed and elected officials.

3 Coordinating structures should be empowered to guide systems change and assure collaboration.

An effective coordinating structure should have the legitimacy and authority to make decisions that cut across existing service systems. If they are to be durable and sustainable, coordinating structures should also have a strong mandate from public and private service providers and political bodies to plan and implement changes in how services are delivered. These might include, for example, school boards, county government, city government, states, professional associations, and United Way. Such a mandate should include significant influence over the use of resources within a community but does not necessarily include direct authority over resources under the control of other governmental structures. (The latter step would reach beyond issues of coordination and collaboration to a fundamental reorganization of state and local governance, as well as changes in federal law.) A coordinating structure with the formal sanction of established governance structures has the greatest potential to establish its credibility, obtain the desired results, and sustain itself over time.

4 Coordinating structures should have flexibility in defining geographic boundaries and institutional relationships.

Where the state has responsibility for service delivery, it should work with communities to define geographic areas that make sense. Furthermore, communities should have flexibility to sort out the relationships among the numerous collaborative and established governance structures in their localities.

5 Coordinating structures should establish and maintain a results-based accountability system.

If systemic changes in the way services are planned, organized, and delivered are to be effective and durable, all public and private service providers must be accountable for achieving specified—and shared—results. They should agree on how their collaborative as well as individual efforts will be measured.

6 Coordinating structures should be encouraged without prescribing a specific structure or authority.

Each one will develop on a different timetable and to meet unique needs. Therefore, the structures will rely on different blueprints, although they should incorporate the other principles described in this document.

7 Federal and state levels should model collaboration that supports community efforts.

Collaboration should be a priority at all levels of governance. Such collaboration is necessary so that individuals and agencies have an easily recognizable contact point at the state and federal level for information and technical assistance.

8 Federal and state policies should provide incentives that encourage collaboration among public, private, and community agencies.

External incentives often are needed to give communities the needed resources, tools, and focus that will help their various service systems begin to build sustainable collaborative structures. These could be waivers that remove barriers to collaboration and/or grants to support collaborative initiatives.

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